

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

MAYOR SHIRLEY FRANKLIN JANUARY 5, 2004

Thank you.

Council President Woolard, members of the City Council, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here with me today as we begin our work in 2004.

As I thought over the holidays about how I could sum up the state of our great city today, I began by reflecting on the first two years of my administration.

I made the decision to run for Mayor because I was concerned about the direction in which our city was moving. In 2000 and 2001, I saw a city with tremendous potential.

But I also saw a city that was being held back from achieving that potential.

There was, to my eyes, a big gap between the kind of responsive city government our citizens believed they <u>ought</u> to have and the government that they actually <u>had</u>.

Too many of our people saw city government as indifferent to their concerns - to the everyday, nuts-and-bolts issues that affected their lives.

That's why, when I was inaugurated almost two years ago, I laid out a simple agenda - dealing with public safety, a clean environment, ethics reform, a responsive city government and effective city services.

I wanted our city to deal effectively, once again, with the nuts and bolts.

With your help, I believe we have, during the first two years of my administration, dealt successfully with many of the "nuts and bolts" issues facing our city.

We will continue to deal with those issues.

We must.

But as this new year begins, I believe it is time for us, as citizens, to raise our gaze higher - to focus not just on the nuts and bolts, but on what those nuts and bolts are holding together.

Over the last few weeks, the more I thought about the state of our city today, the more I found myself drifting back in time ... to 1972, the year I first made Atlanta my home.

I think it would be more accurate if I said I was <u>drawn</u> to Atlanta. Although I grew up in Philadelphia, I moved to Atlanta from Talladega, Alabama, where I was teaching in the early 1970s.

At that time in my life, Atlanta was a beacon of light to me. Its museums, its music, its nightlife, its rich social life and history ... all these things drew me to Atlanta.

Since that time, 32 years ago, I've been an Atlantan.

This city has given me every professional opportunity I ever dreamed of.

And in this city, I raised three wonderful children. Two daughters, now young women and one son, now a grown man. All of them are products of this city's schools and its institutions of higher learning - Georgia State University, Morehouse College, Spelman College.

All of them are truly native Atlantans. This city is where they still make their homes.

This city is, I hope, where their children will make their homes.

So, as I thought about what to say to you today, I've tried to raise my own gaze higher than the nuts and bolts of city government, I've tried to think about what kind of Atlanta I want to leave for my children and grandchildren.

I've asked myself, "What kind of city must Atlanta be if it is to continue drawing people to it, just as it drew me here 32 years ago?"

Perhaps, because I was thinking about this over the Christmas holiday, I found myself returning again and again to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

I kept thinking about the 14th and 15th verses of the fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew, when Jesus said,

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it gives light unto all that are in the house."

I have challenged myself, and today I challenge all of us – elected officials, business and civic leaders, activists and citizens – to ask ourselves this question:

"What must we do to build an Atlanta that gives light to all its citizens - and to the state, the region and even the nation around it?

What must we do to make Atlanta a city on a hill, a city that shines so brightly that she draws the most creative, inventive and intelligent souls into her midst?

What must we do, so our children, born and raised here, want to stay here?"

The times demand this kind of vision from us. In these, the earliest years of the 21st Century, our city is changing so quickly, and in so many ways.

Our communities are changing, as old neighborhoods adapt to new residents and businesses.

The demographic makeup of our city is changing as our population, for the first time in decades, is again on the rise. The very nature of commercial and residential development in Atlanta is changing as we adapt to the challenges posed by greater population density and traffic congestion.

All these changes have left many of our citizens feeling unsettled, uncertain of the future of their city.

To restore the confidence of the citizens of this great city, those of us who are in positions of leadership - in city government and beyond - must <u>see</u> with clarity and <u>communicate</u> with clarity a picture of the kind of city we want to build.

The changes our city is facing demand this of us.

The times demand that we remember the words of Frederick Douglass, who said:

"Our destiny is largely in our own hands.

If we <u>find</u>, we shall have to <u>seek</u>.

If we succeed in the race of life, it must be by our own energies and our own exertions.

Others may clear the road, but we must go forward."

Many great Atlantans have cleared the road for us.

Our two Nobel Prize winners, the Reverend Martin Luther King Junior and President Jimmy Carter, along with both their families. My predecessors as Mayor, such as William Hartsfield, Ivan Allen, Andrew Young and Maynard Jackson. And many other leaders in business and civic life: Henry and Billie Aaron, Barbara Asher, John Calhoun, Johnetta Cole, John Wesley Dobbs, Roberto Goizueta, Grace Hamilton, Susie LaBord, Congressman John Lewis, Benjamin Mays, the Paschal brothers, John Portman, Robert Shaw, Ted Turner, Carl Ware, Robert Woodruff and Ella Yates.

The list is long. But I do not stand here to compare myself to the great leaders and visionaries of our city's history.

At the end of my life, I will know that the most important job I <u>ever</u> held was to be the mother of three wonderful children, the lights of my life.

So, in my own thinking, I simplified the question, I asked myself:

"What kind of city do I want to leave to my own children – Kai, Kabral and Kali – and to their children and their children's children?"

I know that, because I hold this office, I am in a unique position to affect the kind of city we will leave for all our children. So, when I raise my gaze and look at the future of Atlanta, here's what I see.

I see a city that is safe and clean.

I see a city that cares for people, its own residents and visitors alike.

I see a city governed honestly, open and responsively.

And I see a city with all the hallmarks of the world's greatest cities - a thriving business community,

great cultural and educational institutions,

great transportation and great neighborhoods,

full of the distinctive environments that make people feel warm and welcomed,

whether they've lived here for 50 years or got here five minutes ago.

I see a city where children are safe as they walk from their homes to the neighborhood park, a city where our children play in a clean environment.

I look at the wonderful rehabilitation of city parks and recreation centers, such as Ellsworth Park, at the corner of Howell Mill and Collier, or Brownwood Recreation Center on Emerson Avenue in Southeast Atlanta, or Adamsville Center on the Southwest Side, and I know that we are moving in the right direction.

I look at the work we've all done as we've struggled to ensure clean water and working sewer systems for generations to come, and I know that we are moving in the right direction.

I see the help we are receiving from the state government, from leaders such as Governor Sonny Perdue, Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor, House Speaker Terry Coleman, Senator Eric Johnson and Representative Calvin Smyre, and I know that we are on the right track.

I look at the work that our Fire Department is doing through its new Atlanta Smoke Alarm Program, installing free smoke alarms throughout the City upon request, and I know that we are working to leave a safe city for our children.

I see a city where people live <u>free</u> of unreasonable fear of crime, or fire, or crumbling infrastructure.

We have many days of work to do to realize this vision, but I know an Atlanta like that would give light to all its citizens.

What else does this Mayor see when she dreams of the city she hopes to leave for <u>all</u> our children and grandchildren?

I see a city of people who genuinely care for the families, the children, the elders who live and work inside its boundaries, a city that creates economic opportunity for all, and a city where visitors immediately feel the hospitality and warmth of the community.

I look at the work done by our Commission on Homelessness, led by Horace Sibley, Myrtle Davis and Dr. Louis Sullivan, raising millions of dollars and bringing together many organizations in what has become a national model for how to fight homelessness, and I know we are moving in the right direction, a caring direction.

I look at the successful Diversity Program at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and I see a city that values diversity as a mainstream American ideal. It has been a stunning success, with businesses owned by women and minorities taking on more than a third of the work as we expand the airport, without jeopardizing quality. Our Diversity Program is a truly eliminating barriers, guaranteeing economic opportunity for all who wish to participate and it is a model for the entire country.

And when I go to the West End and get a warm greeting - and amazing chicken patties - from immigrants Neil and Neville Ernandez at their restaurant, A Taste of the Caribbean, I know that I live in a city that welcomes people from all cultures. And I see how our newcomers quickly adopt our city's boundless capacity to welcome warmly all who visit.

We have many a day's work to do to realize this vision of caring, but an Atlanta like that would give light not only to its citizens, but to people who visit us for even a single day.

I see a city where government is characterized by honesty, openness, effectiveness and efficiency - a city where the water is clean, the potholes get fixed and the citizens get real service from public servants.

By addressing basic quality-of-life issues - traffic problems, parking problems, trash pickup and so forth - we are moving in the right direction.

But we have a long, long way to go.

We have many a day's work to do to realize this vision of a totally open and responsive city government, but an Atlanta like that would give light to - and be an example for - not only our children, but for our entire state and region.

I see a city that aspires not only to be livable, but also to actually be lovable.

I see a city where anyone, no matter who they are or where they're from, can find places that make them say to themselves, 'I love this city.'

I know we are heading in the right direction when I look at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Once again, it is not only the world's busiest airport, but also the world's most efficient big airport. The 5.4 + billion dollar expansion is the largest public works project in the history of Georgia. It will ensure that the airport remains an economic engine for our entire state, generating more than \$18 billion per year in economic output.

I know we are heading in the right direction when I look at the expansion and renovation now under way at the Woodruff Arts Center. Renzo Piano's design will bring a true feeling of urbanism to the cultural heart of our City, giving us grand public spaces that befit the grand works of art presented inside the Center itself.

I know we are heading in the right direction as I watch the rise of Atlantic Station, a new kind of development that will allow people to live, work, shop and play in a truly urban, pedestrian environment.

I know we are heading in the right direction when I look at the work being done by many builders, developers throughout our city, people who are building new homes and refurbishing existing ones with an extraordinary sensitivity to the character and architecture of our great neighborhoods.

And I know we are heading in the right direction when I look at the incredible work, being led by Cathy Woolard, to reclaim our abandoned urban rail lines and create the BeltLine transit loop. This great vision, when realized, will link together more than 40 neighborhoods, allowing our citizens to travel from their own neighborhoods to places they love in other neighborhoods, without worrying about traffic jams and parking.

So much work is going on to make our city not just livable, but lovable. And there are many more days of hard work to do.

But when that work is finished.

Atlanta will be a place of tremendous cultural, historical and educational institutions, linked by transportation system, befitting a classic urban environment.

A city like that gives light to the entire world.

What I want for the children of Atlanta - and what I truly believe we <u>all</u> really want - is that kind of city.

A city on a hill that <u>cannot</u> be hidden.

A city that beckons people of creativity, ambition and intellect to come and be part of its daily ebb and flow.

A city that holds its sons and daughters fast to its bosom, because they can't imagine that they would love another city more than they love Atlanta.

A city that gives as much light to the world as New York or Paris or London, but with a uniquely Southern twist.

This is the kind of Atlanta that I imagine for my children ... and for yours.

We can build such a city.

Thanks to many of you in this room, and many others, the work is already under way.

Many hurdles are before us.

Our work will not be finished tomorrow. It will not be finished by the time my administration as Mayor comes to an end.

But I know the only hope that I have of actually <u>seeing</u> the city that I envision is to do my work, one day at a time.

As I prepared to speak to you today, I remembered the words of Anna Mary Robertson Moses, the great American painter and illustrator known as "Grandma Moses," who continued to be vital and creative until she died at age 101. Grandma Moses published her autobiography in 1952, when she was 92 years old. In it, she wrote some words that I believe we all must take to heart:

"I look back on my life like a good day's work," she wrote. "It was done and I am satisfied with it."

Building the kind of Atlanta we <u>all</u> envision requires us - citizens, elected officials, our business and civic and religious leaders, all of us - to work through our differences and get on with a day's work.

Because a good day's work,

repeated day after day,

will create the kind of city we dream of for our children -

a city that truly gives light to its citizens and to the wide world around it.

I close with a quote from my good friend Dr. Johnnetta Cole, former President of Spelman College. At her recent inauguration as the president of Bennett College last October she said, "The more we pull together toward a new day, the less it matters what pushed us apart in the past."

Thank you very much.